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2. Mr. Dabbs ^{AC} TEUR
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ADDRESS OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO

United States Mission,
Berlin, Germany,

December 23, 1963.

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Dear John:

I have owed you a letter for quite some time now, but the multifarious efforts of the past month have reduced us all to doing only that which has been necessary to keep body and soul together. To take up your last point first, I am certainly aware of the disadvantages of cracking open Free Style and monkeying with its insides. I fended off and rewrote various proposed messages from hereabouts which took negative positions on the probe during the recent autobahn incidents, and, as you will note from the November 19 Deputy POLDs' minutes, I have done somewhat the same thing with the British proposal. I do not think, however, that it would be useful to insist that the plan not be examined or even to some extent redirected. My philosophy in almost all this planning is to create the capability and keep it in being. Most of the discussion about when to use it and for what precise purpose seems to me largely irrelevant. I don't mind if people want to discuss these things so long as the plan remains intact as a blueprint for an operation. The important thing will be to avoid reopening the basic question whether the plan should be retained or abandoned. If all the discussion is based on the assumption that the plan will be retained, I think we will be all right. In my own thinking about Free Style, I am continually impressed with the mists that cover the ground between an autobahn incident and the initiation of Phase II. I certainly could not guarantee that Free Style would not prove useful in this obscure transition stage.

You asked in your letter of November 15 what thought had been given to the possible use of a tank dozer to attempt removal of APCs on the autobahn. There was indeed some consideration of this, although I do not

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think anyone considered that higher level approval would be likely. We all pretty much agreed that use of a dozer against an APC full of men would be tricky, and probably not worth the risk. Most of us here were inclined to believe, in any case, that once the Soviets had shown themselves willing to accept a physical confrontation on the autobahn, effective efforts to induce a change in their course of action would have to take place elsewhere than on the spot. A fairly major escalation on our side, or the threat of it, would be an important additional factor for them to consider, but I do not think another piece of machinery which can be easily blocked by a second piece of machinery would be likely to do this. More effective, I think, would be the assembly near the autobahn of a fairly sizable armored force containing tank dozers, and we had plans fairly well advanced in the November incident to do something like this. There are two dangers in minor escalation, of which I know you are well aware. One is that it can convey an impression of caution rather than of determination. The other is that steps which can be easily frustrated give a public image of impotence and generally ineffectual struggle. This is not true of the initial effort to proceed without clearance, which is a clean-cut, symbolic act without elaborate pretensions.

You may have been somewhat puzzled, during the recent flap, at Berlin's recommendation that harmonized procedures be passed to the Soviets. You may also have wondered at the ease with which the Commandants reached agreement on procedure. With respect to the first question, it was becoming rapidly clear to us that we stood a good chance of losing the war after having won the battle, and that this was in large part due to the feeling in the US and in the West generally that our position was not entirely sound. We had seen this operate in the case of advance notification. We therefore decided that the disadvantages of informing the Soviets were less important than the advantages of committing ourselves to a particular policy in such a way that it would be difficult to depart from it, and that, at the same time, we would be less inclined to wish to depart from it. I hope this will prove to be the effect. The most recent instructions from JCS seem to indicate that our only restriction on convoy size is the maintenance of a passenger maximum per vehicle, counting all vehicles in the convoy. As the JCS pointed out, this will not make for much change in our practices, and we are therefore content with it.

With reference to the Commandants' agreement, we were all a little surprised ourselves. We rushed off to a midnight meeting (11:30 actually) some of us in black tie, without much specific preparation. We recognized that the key problem was advance notice since the US and British policies were not incompatible on tailgates (given different heights) and the

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British dismount policy was not much different in principle than ours. Advance notice did prove to be the main bone of contention, the British desiring that we reduce to their level. We pointed out that it was practice and not theory which would cause incident. The British could come up to our level for purposes of formal Allied position but still avoid sending convoys in the area of potential disagreement. This was accepted. It had always seemed to me that practice was the key to harmonization, and that most of the argument was, or could be, pretty academic. Even now, the British may in effect employ different practices in some respects by rigging the composition of convoys. Total harmonization, in the sense of completely identical practices, is not likely, but this should not cause us trouble in normal circumstances.

We are in good shape generally so far as tripartite political coordination is concerned. Jean-Claude Winckler has taken over as French Deputy and is a great addition. My new French counterpart, one Luc Baldit, is a little difficult but tries, I think, to be helpful. The British are fine and we have developed very good and close relations.

We are at the moment intrigued by the way in which the Christmas pass issue was handled by the Germans. We here in Berlin were kept thoroughly, although frequently rather belatedly, informed. We were never at any time, however, asked for our views. At the express request of the Allies, Brandt met on one occasion with the Commandants to discuss the general subject and in particular the handling of the Allied EK/O. We could, of course, have intervened if things had seemed to be going wrong, but the fact that the Senat was already well down the next leg of the course by the time we heard about it would have made such intervention extremely awkward. Consultation by the Senat with the Federal Republic was much more substantive and timely. It was quite evident that the Germans set about to handle the matter their way and within limits that they considered acceptable. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Our basic approach was that if the Federal Republic found a course of action acceptable, we could hardly disapprove on general political grounds. In addition, it seemed to us that the Senat handled the negotiations with the FRG in a way which was nonetheless a subtle, and I think important, element in the customary relationships among the two Germanys. We do not see any particular problem around the new situation in this respect but it is quite clear that the Germans are having more to say, and the Allies less, in the local management of Berlin.

We are also intrigued by the Soviet-East German handling of the campaign against US activities in East Berlin. Dobrynin's approach to Ambassador Thompson on what appears to be a completely fabricated incident at Checkpoint Charlie is especially interesting. (It is not usually possible to double check the basis for alleged traffic violations within East Berlin; however, there are a lot of people, including German police, who would see any incident occurring at the Checkpoint.) In addition to the speculations we have already mentioned on Communist

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motivation, I wonder if the Soviets may not have as a purpose the cultivation of doubt and distrust in the minds of the Washington leadership concerning the behavior of US representatives in Berlin. I recall that the campaign against the behavior of local Allied military within East Berlin began just as the Soviets were alleging that irresponsible actions of American officers on the autobahn were to blame for the autobahn incident of October 10-12. The Soviets have since then hit this theme several times. They may think there is fertile ground in which to grow such a crop of distrust, and they may see various specified or unspecified advantages for themselves in it. This sounds a bit far-fetched but is worth watching as this curious campaign continues.

Sincerely,



Arthur R. Day

Copies to: AmEmbassy Bonn - Mr. Sutterlin
USAREUR/POLAD - Mr. Parelman
EUCOM/POLAD - Mr. James
USMPC SHAPE - Mr. Kendrick

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